

Message Text

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SUBJECT: POST RELATIONSHIPS WITH AMERICAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

REF: A) STATE 094266 2) BONN 06769

1. POST WELCOMES DEPARTMENT'S INVITATION TO DISCUSS RELATIONSHIP WITH AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND HAS FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON PRESENT STATUS RELATIONSHIP IN BERLIN:

2. BERLIN OFFICE OF AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IS ONE-MAN, HALF-TIME ORGANIZATION AND IS BRANCH OF AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN GERMANY, HEADQUARTERED FRANKFURT. IN SPECIFIC AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT MENTIONED REF 1), NONE ARE ISSUES IN BERLIN. MISSION OFFICERS HAVE ALMOST DAILY CONTACTS WITH CHAMBER; THE MINISTER HAS CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHAMBER'S EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND WITH AMERICAN BUSINESS INTERESTS CHAMBER REPRESENTS. THERE IS LITTLE DUPLICATION OF EFFORT IN SERVICING REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION FROM UNITED STATES BUSINESS. CHAMBER REFERS MOST REQUEST DIRECTLY TO POST'S ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL SECTION, ESPECIALLY FOR WTDR-TYPE CREDIT INFORMATION. IN SHORT, WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH AMERICAN CHAMBER IS MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL.

3. AT A MORE ABSTRACT LEVEL WE HAVE ON OCCASION NOTED SOME SENTIMENT AMONG CHAMBER MEMBERS THAT THE AMERICAN CHAMBER SHOULD TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE AS A SPIKESMAN ABROAD FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS INTERESTS. WERE THIS EVER

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TO BECOME A CHAMBER POLICY WE COULD PERCIVED CERTAIN

PROBLEMS. IN BERLIN, FOR INSTANCE, MOST MEMBERS OF AMERICAN CHAMBER ARE NOT AMERICANS. THE BERLIN CHAMBER COUNTS 126 MEMBERS; ONLY 11 ARE FIRMS WHERE CONTROLLING INTEREST IS AMERICAN. ANOTHER 22 ARE DELEGATED MEMBERS REPRESENTING GERMAN BRANCHES OF UNITED STATES MAJOR PARTICIPATION FIRMS; AND ADDITIONAL SEVEN ARE INDIVIDUAL UNITED STATES CITIZENS WITH BUSINESS INTERESTS BARELY DISTINGUISHABLE FROM BUSINESS INTERESTS OF LOCAL NATIONALS. BULK OF CHAMBER MEMBERS ARE THEREFORE GERMAN FIRMS WITH TRADE TIES TO THE UNITED STATES. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT SEEMS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT THE COMPOSITION OF OUR BERLIN CHAMBER WOULD COLOR ANY PUBLIC POSITIONS ADVOCATED. IN MANY CASES POSITIONS COULD SUPPORT OPINIONS OF GERMAN BUSINESS AS EXPRESSED THROUGH GERMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY AND AMERICAN CHAMBER WOULD THEREBY RISK LABEL OF BEING A DEFINABLE INTEREST GROUP IN LOCAL CONTEXT.

4. IN NOTING SPECIAL SITUATION OF BERLIN AMERICAN CHAMBER WE WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT THERE RARELY HAVE BEEN PROBLEMS AND THEY HAVE BEEN QUICKLY RESOLVED IN COOPERATIVE ATMOSPHERE. NEVERTHELESS, FROM UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT VIEWPOINT WE THINK DIALOGUE WITH NATIONAL CHAMBER, IF IT IS INDEED NOT ALREADY WELL UNDERWAY COULD BE USEFUL IF DIRECTED TOWARD BRAOD UNDERSTANDING OF IMPLICATIONS OF ANY ASSERTION OF CHAMBER ROLE AS PUBLIC SPOKESMAN FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS ABROAD AND THE WEIGHTY PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION AND IDENTIFICATION WHICH WOULD THEREBY BE RAISED. IN SPECIAL CASE OF BUSINESS ABORAD, HOWEVER, POINT COULD BE MADE THAT MAXIMUM COMMUNICATION ON POLICY NOT SYNONOMOUS WITH DOMINATION AND INTEREST OF ALL PARTIES. GEORGE

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